

Blocking key in Lions' victory over Red Storm

By Ryan Loy
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Every time the St. John's players tried to hit the ball over the net to the Nittany Lions' side of the court, it came right back at them.

The No. 2 Penn State women's volleyball team didn't quite get rolling offensively Saturday night, but thanks to strong blocking it easily swept the Red Storm (25-11, 25-15, 25-5).

The Lions lifted their hitting percentage to a respectable .314 by the match's end, but for much of the night it was their ability to stuff St. John's attack that helped them control play.

Penn State out-blocked the Red Storm 16.5-3.0 in the match — including a 9.0-1.0 advantage in the first set.

The 16.5 blocks were the most the Lions had in any match this season.

"I don't think we had a great night hitting, but we blocked really well," Penn State coach Russ Rose said. "I thought [Saturday night] was a much better blocking night, and it needs to be because that's a team that takes full swings."

Though Rose didn't believe his team's blocking was significant in the first two matches of the week-

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Russ Rose
women's volleyball coach

end against George Washington and Princeton — both three-set wins — the Lions still held a considerable advantage in blocking. Penn State totaled 35 blocks during the three weekend matches while opponents had just four.

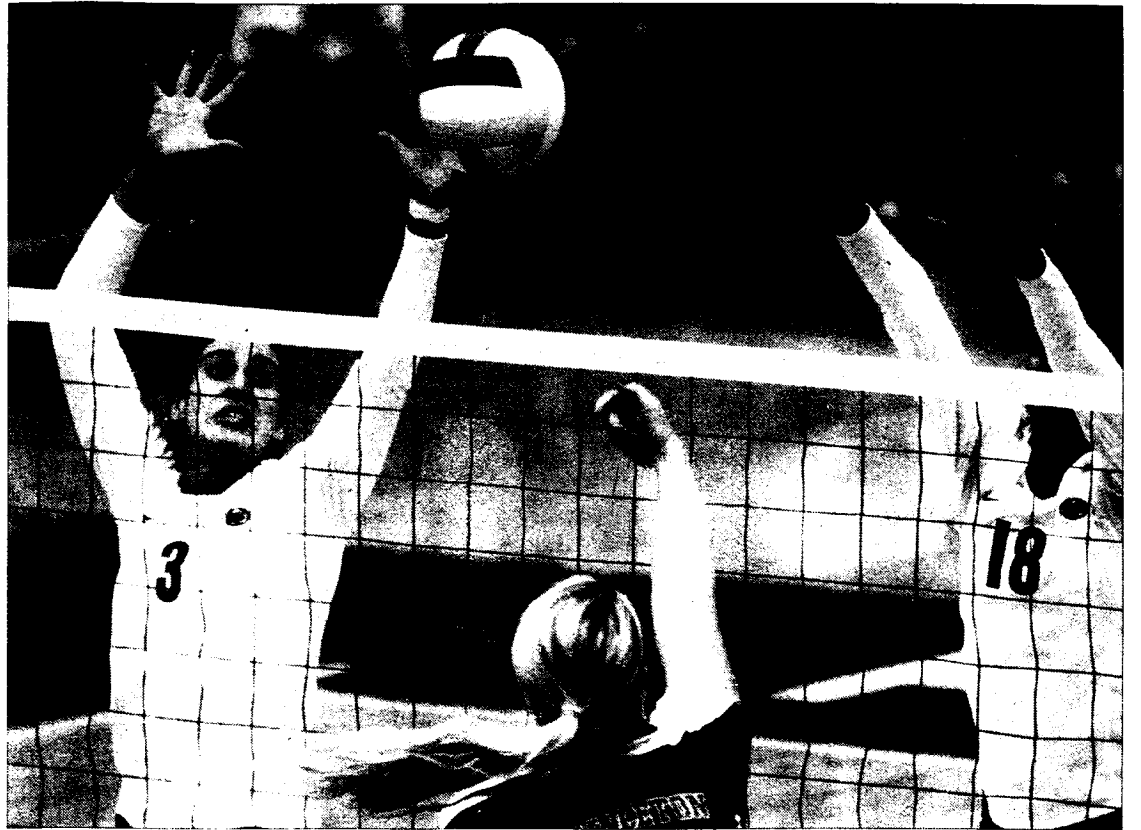
The Lions had six different players contribute to the blocking against St. John's, with senior Fatima Balza and junior Katie Kabbes leading the team with eight apiece.

Rose said he was happy with the way his team handled the Red Storm because St. John's has some international players whose style of play was unknown.

The Lions front row consistently had two or three players contesting attacks with their arms extended over the net. Many of those challenges resulted in blocks or Red Storm hitting errors.

Penn State held the visitors to a .257 hitting percentage, well below St. John's season average of .322.

Penn State senior opposite hitter Blair Brown said the Lions concentrated on sealing the net during last week's practices and



Dana Heller/Collegian

Senior middle hitter Fatima Balza (3) and freshman outside hitter Deja McClendon (18) block a ball.

did a good job of transferring it to their matches.

"We did a lot of triple blocks [Saturday night], which is nice to see us moving around and making sure we get out to the block even when it's not the easiest thing to do," Brown said.

"Working hard on blocking really pays off."

The match against St. John's was just the kind Brown likes.

While some players like the feeling of recording a kill, Brown said rejecting an opponent is a little more satisfying for her.

"I love to block. It's a personal thing," Brown said.

"I know a lot of people really like to hit the ball, but I love stopping someone from getting a kill. It's the best feeling."

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By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2010:

This year, you benefit from substantial changes. Tune in to your instincts when you feel off. You often juggle different concerns, not knowing which choice to make. Not making a judgment is often the same as making one. Don't play games with yourself. Conversations, especially with siblings and neighbors, could be pointed and difficult. If you are single, you head in a new direction and meet some very intriguing people. Be a bit less judgmental than in the past. If you are attached, you open the door to a new type of interaction by being a little less covert and more forthright. PISCES can be challenging.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
*** Trust your intuition, and you won't go wrong. Understand that someone feels ill at ease with you. Opportunities come in from out of left field. Complications turn into adventures with the correct outlook. You could be amazed by what life can and will produce. Tonight: Go along for the ride.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
**** Zero in on possibilities that you have resisted up till now. Investigate what someone keeps throwing into your face. A meeting might be a great avenue for self-expression. Express yourself in a way that others can understand your position. Tonight: Where the fun is.
GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

**** Take a stand while you are clear of a situation or a problem. Funnel your energy into your work as only you can. Knowing your limits could be significant. Enthusiasm between you and a boss could make a big difference. Tonight: Burning the midnight oil.
CANCER (June 21-July 22)
**** Keep reaching out for others. If you need an expert or an offbeat opinion, go for it. The more diverse the feedback, the stronger a project can become. Do remain open. Tonight: Follow the music.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
**** Keep reaching out for those at a distance. You might feel that you cannot win for losing. Really, that might not be true. You cannot succeed without an agreement with a partner or partners. Keep that in mind when making necessary decisions. Tonight: Dinner for two... and a talk.
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
**** Others defer with ease and come to a clear understanding. Your sense of direction is poignant and direct. You laugh, and another person responds. Question the possibilities more openly. Tonight: The only answer is yes.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
*** Keep an easy, mellow pace, and you will discover that the end results are more than worth it. You cannot always have situations go the way you desire. Realize what the possibilities might be if you just relax. Tonight: Clear out an errand or two.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
**** Build on existing knowledge, adding that flair your sign is uniquely

known for. How you handle a changeable situation has a lot to do with your mood. Distance yourself from automatic reactions. Tonight: Fun and games.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
*** Getting going presents its share of challenges. To be honest, you might want to curl up and just be. Something must be handled and will energize you... of that you can be sure. Tonight: Play it low-key.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
**** Keep communication rolling. You have drive and direction. The unexpected occurs. Your daily life and directions put pressure on the possibilities. Tonight: Visit with a friend.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
**** Be aware of your limits. Then decide if the result of a situation is self-imposed. Your tolerance level is changing. Also, you are willing to do whatever you must to open doors. Use care with spending. Tonight: Do some shopping on the way home.
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
**** Use your high energy to achieve your desired results rather than cause a result that might not be as supportive. Drum up your self-discipline, focus and verbal skills, then you'll accomplish a lot. Tonight: All smiles.

BORN TODAY
Actor Joseph Mazzello (1983), singer Faith Hill (1967), actor Bill Murray (1950) ***

Jacqueline Bigar is on the Internet at www.jacquelinebigar.com.

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